Climate Change

CASE STUDIES

EPA WASTE WISE
Preserving Resources, Preventing Waste

Allergan: Looking at Life Cycles, Reducing Greenhouse Gases

After winning the title of Large Business Program Champion three years in a row, Allergan, Inc. turned up the heat in 2002 and won the Climate Change Program Champion award. This pharmaceutical manufacturer prevented 1,722 metric tons of carbon equivalent (MTCE) of greenhouse gases (GHG) from being produced—which is comparable to taking 1,300 cars off the road for an entire year!

"We design every product with its full environmental impact in mind—from the initial ingredients to the final packaging. We use as little material as possible," says Michael Whaley, the company's Director of Environmental Health and Safety. Allergan performs a full assessment of potential waste during new product development, evaluating the potential environmental impact of each step in a product's life. The pharmaceutical manufacturer also regularly evaluates existing products for opportunities to further minimize their environmental impact.

During each lifecycle analysis, Allergan focuses on reducing, reusing, and recycling. Turning its attention to packaging, the company uses the following guidelines: prevent waste before it is created; purchase and ship products in bulk with the least amount of packaging necessary; purchase products containing recycled material; and purchase products that are recyclable or come in recyclable packaging. These guidelines have proved successful. In 2001 alone, Allergan achieved success with these guidelines, reducing packaging material by 75 tons, which translates to greenhouse gas reductions equaling 53 MTCE. By redesigning the packaging involved with bottle tips and caps, Allergan reduced a total of 28 tons of LDPE and HDPE plastics, or 26 MTCE.

Every stage of a product's life releases GHGs—raw material acquisition, manufacturing, packaging, distribution, use, and disposal. Decreasing the amounts of materials throughout the lifecycle serves as the best strategy for reducing GHG emissions. [If a material must be used, however, recycling is the next best option.] Recycling keeps materials out of landfills and incinerators, which prevents the emission of GHGs during decomposition and burning and reduces the energy use associated with extracting virgin materials.

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In 2001, Allergan collected 2,271 tons of recyclable material, generating $264,000 in revenue, saving an estimated $100,000 in disposal costs, and preventing the emission of more than 1,600 MTCE. Additionally, the company's corrugated cardboard and office paper recycling of saved more than 7,000 trees, which remove carbon dioxide, a GHG, from the atmosphere.